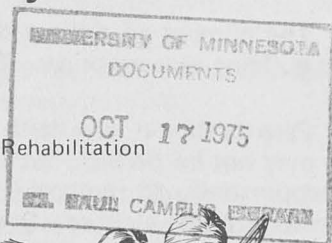


ABILITY -- not disability**With Families**

HARRIET E. MELDAHL, Area Extension Agent, Rehabilitation
with JOYCE WASCOE, Rehabilitation Assistant



Family cooperation may be difficult to forge in the average family, but in a home with a handicapped parent, it is crucial. It is important for children to help around the home.

A child's response to discipline and cooperation depends more on family attitudes than a parent's physical handicaps.

Partnership is the feeling to build within a family. Parents hope that if a child accepts responsibility at home, he will be more responsible in the community as well.

There are three ways parents treat a child: PARTNER, PARASITE, and SERVANT.

Parents who treat their child like a PARASITE feel the child lacks the ability or desire to take responsibility and consequently they don't give him any. They actually deny the youngster the right to try. The child quickly learns to allow someone else to do the work for him.

Other parents treat their child as a SERVANT. They feel their offspring has ability but no desire to accept responsibility. They get their way by force. The child becomes a servant—but he does not become a responsible person.

In a PARTNERSHIP, adults encourage the child to participate, indirectly teaching him the satisfaction of helping make a home run well.

It is important to work with a child in doing tasks around the house. Do it together and don't expect the child to do it alone—at least not at first.

The number of tasks a child is required to perform has little to do with building responsibility. The tasks he does perform should be important.

Parents should have faith in the child's ability. First attempts at any task may not be perfect, but the child will learn quickly. Give the child the opportunity to perform. It's best to do this when he first shows an interest in doing a chore. Don't put him off. Encourage and praise the effort. Don't praise the child. Finally, allow for imperfections. There are bound to be some at first.

Young Children

Handicapped mothers often feel limited and are hesitant to have children. Warmth and love can compensate for a physical disability.

Young children quickly learn to respond to the parent's handicap. They learn to lie still when being diapered and some babies even will lift themselves up. Babies only a few months old learn to sit, leaning against their mother while the wheelchair is moving. Mothers with use of only one arm can use snap diapers or disposable ones with tapes instead of pins.

Arm limitations also may require children's clothing that opens down the front for easy handling. Wide-mouthed baby bottles that are easy to fill and nipples with caps that screw on instead of pull on should be used.

Organization is the key to taking care of an infant whether you are handicapped or not. Supplies and a diaper pail should be close to the bed or changing table. A changing table at a usable height can make baby care much easier. It may be convenient for mothers to keep often-used items such as diapers in more than one place in the house.

Make everything as easy for yourself as possible in the nursery. Some mothers like to have the crib standing out from the wall so they can get around to make it. Save energy by making one side of the bed completely and then the other.

Meals should be prepared and ready before the baby is brought out. Keeping the baby on a schedule enables you to anticipate his needs.

Playpens keep baby in a safe place while mother does other things. Playpens that are high off the floor are available so mother does not have to reach too far down when getting baby in and out. Another type has a side that folds down so it is easier to get at baby.

Because of her handicap the mother is not tempted to depend on physical strength to enforce obedience. A mother must build trust to win cooperative behavior. Children are secure because they know she will be at home when they need her. She can be a sympathetic listener for their problems and ideas.

Play Activities

Play activities are good ways to interact with children and teach them fairness and responsibility. Often it is difficult for mothers to think up new play ideas when they are confined indoors.

It would be ideal if a mother could supervise her children in a fenced play area next to the house, but this is not always possible.

Acrobatics

Children can do a limited form of acrobatics indoors if mother is willing to put up with the noise. Equipment is available for indoor gyms that take little space.

Dress-Up

Old hats, high heels, ties, pants, are all that is needed for an old fashioned dress-up. Young children love to play at make believe and these are the only props necessary. It is important for mother to be on hand to help tie ties and arrange hats and sometimes take part in the action. She shouldn't be the director, however.

Reading

Reading stories to children is one of their favorite pastimes. There are many variations on this theme. Have the children cut out pictures and paste them on colored paper to illustrate the story.

The parent can start telling a story with each child adding an adventure of his own.

Children can sing the words to an easy storybook. Puppets can also be used to dramatize the story or the children can act out the story.

Growing Things

Nature has an infinite variety of plants to learn from and enjoy. The Agricultural Extension Service provides free pamphlets on many growing things. A small garden, a window box, a house plant, are all fun for children.

A terrarium involves some planning and materials:

- . small rocks on the bottom for drainage
- . soil
- . plants that will not grow too quickly
- . jar with cover

A simple or fancy bottle may be used. If the neck of the bottle is small, special long tweezers may be needed to insert the plants. Small rocks or animals may be added for decoration. Water the plants thoroughly and replace the cover. If moisture does not appear on the inside of the glass the next day, add a little more water. After that, it should be kept covered and should not need watering for months.

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA



3 1951 D01 927 347 7

Issued in furtherance of cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Roland H. Abraham, Director of Agricultural Extension Service, University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota 55108. We offer our programs and facilities to all people without regard to race, creed, color, sex, or national origin.